

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001211

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
CAIRO FOR MAXSTADT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2008

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: YORUBA LEADER PA ADESANYA'S VIEWS ON
STATUS OF AD, AFENIFERE, YCE, AND US-NIGERIAN RELATIONS

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL ROBYN HINSON-JONES FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AN

D (D).

1. (U) Summary. Leader of Afenifere and member of the Patriot's group, Pa Abraham Adesanya, says that the April elections must be canceled and an interim government installed until "free and fair" elections can be held. He claims Afenifere is not seriously weakened after the defeat of many Alliance for Democracy (AD) candidates in the elections, and that the organization will continue to promote the political issues that concern Yorubas. Adesanya defends Afenifere as the true mouthpiece of Yoruba political aspirations and stoutly denies that any other group, including the rival Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE), can adequately represent pan-Yoruba interests. Adesanya's claims notwithstanding, the elections gave both Afenifere and the AD a jarring blow. With the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) having swept the Southwest, President Obasanjo has emerged as the preeminent Yoruba politician, casting a large shadow over territory that, until April, seemed like the exclusive domain of Afenifere and the AD. End summary.

The Patriots propose five-year term limits...again

2. (U) On May 23, a group of prominent, mostly Southern, Nigerians, the "Patriots", issued a press statement calling for Nigerians to reject the results of the April 19 Presidential and National Assembly elections. The statement contended that the elections were so riddled with irregularities that a government based on such fraud would be "a disservice to democracy." The group called for a one-year interim government comprised of political party representatives and "other interested groups" that would rule Nigeria until "free and fair" elections would be held.

Afenifere is not dead, not even wounded

3. (U) PolOff met with Chief Pa Abraham Adesanya, head of Afenifere (pan-Yoruba social and cultural organization), member of the Patriots, former Senator from Ogun State, and among the leaders who formed the AD party. The octogenarian Adesanya asked for a meeting at his home, as he was recovering from an illness and under doctor's orders to "get some rest."

4. (C) Adesanya adamantly rejected the prevailing verdict that Afenifere had lost its clout in the southwest after the defeat in the April/May elections of almost all AD candidates. According to Adesanya, Afenifere, is and will be the only organization to pursue issues of concern to Yorubas worldwide. He also rejected the notion that AD is a party for Yorubas and the southwest States only and pointed out that the party has other objectives in different parts of the country and for different constituencies. He noted the facts that AD had fielded opposition candidates in the Hausa north as well as the Igbo southeast, and that the Igbo candidate, Chief Nnanna Uzor Kalu, was one of the few AD winners. As for the notion that the elections revealed Afenifere as a moribund organization for old Yoruba men, Adesanya declared that any Yoruba, male or female, young or old, could join Afenifere. (Comment. Adesanya's statements that Afenifere has an open membership and a pan-Yoruba scope may be true. However, a harder truth was that Afenifere and the AD were routed by the PDP in this last election. Additionally, the criticism from the Southwest about electoral irregularities has, so far, been mild relative to the decibels heard from the Northwest and Southeast. Afenifere and the AD have not

even been able to marshall enough strength to complain vigorously. This is not only a sign of weakness of both groups, but also an acceptance of the election results in the Southwest. End comment.)

Liars, traitors and the Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE)

15. (C) Adesanya became even more acerbic when asked about the relationship among the AD, Afenifere and the YCE. He said that the YCE is comprised of disgruntled Afenifere members who "crawled away" in opposition to his being named leader. He continued, saying that the YCE is not really made up of Yoruba "elders", and has an age threshold of sixty for membership that it does not strictly impose. "Some of their members are in their fifties and even their forties," he complained. According to Adesanya, he was lied to by a founding member of the YCE, Judge Adewale Thompson. Adesanya says he met with Thompson when the first rumors were circulating that a break-away group was forming. He says that Thompson assured him that no such group would be formed. He asserted that elderly founding members of Afenifere (notably ninety-year old Anglican Archdeacon Pa Emmanuel Alayande) were "tricked" into supporting the YCE. Adesanya is totally opposed to a multiplicity of groups representing the Yoruba, saying the "selfish traitors" of the YCE will only bring "trouble into the fold of the Yoruba."

16. (C) (Comment. The YCE was among the first to criticize the Patriots' interim government proposal. In a statement to the Guardian newspaper, a YCE spokesman called the Patriots plan "an invitation to anarchy." The spokesman also said that the YCE considered the April/May elections "the freest and fairest in the history of Nigeria." The YCE position is not surprising. The organization is the brainchild of late Attorney General Bola Ige. Since Ige's demise, President Obasanjo and his allies have progressively taken control of the YCE. Now the YCE, backed by the weight of the President and by PDP electoral gains in the Southwest, is ready to challenge Afenifere for the mantle of the preeminent Yoruba organization. End comment.)

The "so-called" elections and US-Nigerian relations

17. (C) Seeming to gain more energy with each new topic, Adesanya asked PolOff how the US could congratulate the GON on an obviously rigged election and continue relations with any government formed by fraud. PolOff informed him that US Mission goals in Nigeria included supporting stable political and economic growth for Nigeria, and that the USG had congratulated only the Nigerian people on conducting the elections and on the transition from one civilian government to a successor without the military interventions and violence of the past. Adesanya retorted that his complaint against the US was that "your economy and trade are placed above anything else." He continued, saying "I take all your promises and pronouncements with a grain of salt, because I know you are prepared to sacrifice us before your trade."

18. (C) Adesanya said he met with President Olusegun Obasanjo before the elections in April and had promised that the Southwest would be peaceful. He also promised Afenifere and AD support for Obasanjo, a Yoruba. Adesanya said that, because of his pact with Obasanjo, Yorubas did not protest election irregularities, implying that it was he, not Obasanjo's power and influence, that staved off unrest in the Southwest. He added that AD National Chairman Alhaji Ahmed Adamu Abdulkadir, who had at first endorsed the results of the elections then recanted, was unable to speak for the Yorubas. He said Afenifere had opposed Abdulkadir's appointment from the very beginning because Abdulkadir was not a member of any of the founding organizations of the party. Abdulkadir was "surreptitiously" brought in by a group of "traitors" and Adesanya refuses to accept him as Chairman of AD. He added that Afenifere will not support any "new" AD party led by Abdulkadir.

19. (C) Comment. Adesanya has been a prominent politician for decades. He is respected as an elder statesman by Yorubas and non-Yorubas. His views have in the past and will continue to have influence in the Southwest. However, that influence may be on the wane thanks to the elections that put Obasanjo, the PDP and the YCE in a more advantageous position in the Southwest. For many observers, Pa Adesanya personifies what may be a problem with Afenifere and what led to the AD's electoral meltdown--that it is controlled by

octogenarians, out of touch with the younger generation of Yorubas who would rather support a Yoruba already in power than someone who is more ethno-centric but has no chance at national power. Despite Pa's protestations that Afenifere and the AD are not ailing, President Obasanjo now casts a formidable shadow over the Southwestern real estate the two groups once controlled. End comment.
HINSON-JONES